

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Resolution Re: Determinations and Findings

In The Government Center Project Mass R-35

WHEREAS, Boston Redevelopment Authority (hereinafter called the "Authority") is a public body, politic and corporate, duly organized and existing under the provisions of the Housing Authority Law of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and having a usual place of business in the City of Boston, Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, the Authority has, with the approval of the Mayor and City Council of the City of Boston and with financial assistance provided under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended, by the Housing and Home Finance Agency of the United States of America, undertaken and conducted surveys, studies and inspections of an area in the City of Boston, known and referred to as the Government Center Project Area (hereinafter called the "Project Area"), for which area the Authority is preparing a land assembly and redevelopment plan or an urban renewal plan, said area being more particularly described in Exhibit "A" attached hereto and made a part of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Authority has, after due and proper notice, held a public hearing with respect to the Project Area and, at said hearing, received and heard extensive evidence, data, exhibits, views and opinions with respect to said Project Area and its condition, including (a) statements, data and statistics presented by officials of the City of Boston respecting fire control problems in the Project Area and their causes, traffic control problems in the Project Area and their causes, and law enforcement problems in the Project Area and their causes, (b) statements, study reports and extensive exhibits prepared and presented by members of the Authority's staff, including detailed explanations of the study procedures used by the staff, detailed descriptions of the Project Area, the physical conditions and uses of land and structures therein, historical data respecting the economic and land use trends therein, inspection reports respecting the physical condition of every structure in the area, and extensive folios of interior and exterior photographs disclosing the appearance and physical condition of structures throughout the area and in every section thereof and (c) statements, opinions, views and data from various interested individuals, and representatives of various organizations pertaining to the conditions existing in the area;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Boston Redevelopment Authority acting under and pursuant to its powers under the provisions of said Housing Authority Law and any other powers thereunto enabling, does hereby determine, declare and find that the Project Area is a decadent area in that it is an area which is detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare and the sound growth of the community because of one or more of the following reasons and conditions, namely, because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, unfit for human habitation and obsolete, in need of major maintenance and repair, because buildings have been torn down and not replaced and in which under existing conditions it is improbable that the buildings will be replaced, because of a substantial change in business and economic conditions, because of inadequate light, air and open space, because of excessive land coverage, because diversity of ownership, irregular lot sizes and obsolete street patterns make it improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise;

And more particularly, the Authority does hereby determine, declare and find as follows:

1. The Project Area consists of 53.5 acres, of which nearly one-half (22.6 acres) consists of a tangle of narrow streets, alleys and ill-defined squares, leaving a net balance of 30.9 acres, which is solidly built-up, predominantly by commercial buildings occupying close to 100% of each block except where demolition has resulted in parking lots.

2. The Project Area includes 364 major structures, containing approximately 4,372,000 square feet, exclusive of basements. Of this, approximately 692,500 square feet, or 16%, are vacant. The vacancy ratio in this part of the downtown City area is three times the estimated 5% vacancy ratio in the entire downtown City area. Many of the nonresidential buildings were conversions from original residential uses, and many were designed for the nonresidential requirements of the 19th century. These structures are obsolete and ill-adapted to contemporary use.

3. During the past 35 years, 78 structures have been demolished and only one building has been replaced or built. About 75% of the structures in the Project Area were built prior to 1900 and about one-half of these (37% of the total) were constructed more than 100 years ago. There is little or no likelihood that buildings will be replaced or redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise.

4. Most of the structures having been constructed before the City of Boston Fire Code was adopted, only about 6.5% of the present buildings are fire-proof or fire-resistive. Most of the Project Area is within a so-called congested value district as designated by the National Board of Fire Underwriters. In 93 or 25.5 per cent of the structures in the Project Area combustible debris is accumulated to a degree resulting in a serious fire hazard. 303 or 83.2 per cent of the structures in the Project Area have stairways that are not enclosed, constituting a fire hazard. The preponderance of non-fire-proof buildings, the construction of buildings out to the sidewalks, and the narrow, congested streets with their sharp corners make it extremely difficult to move fire fighting equipment quickly and expeditiously to the scene of a fire within the Project Area and creates a major fire control problem. During the past two years, there was an average of one fire for every six buildings in the Project Area, which is more than five times the average for the entire City. Of the fires within the Project Area, 5% were major fires, as compared with an average of 2% for the entire City.

5. Building and environmental deficiencies are numerous and widespread throughout the Project Area. 195 or 53.6 per cent of the structures in the Project Area have roofs which are deteriorated and in need of major repair. 161 or 44.2 per cent of the structures in the Project Area have walls which are deteriorated and in need of major repair. 190 or 52.2 per cent of the structures have outside walls which have broken or loose surfaces or holes or badly worn surfaces and are in need of major repairs. 227 or 62.4 per cent of the structures have inside walls or ceilings which have cracks, holes or badly worn surfaces. 234 or 64.3 per cent of the structures have evidence of leaks and/or missing plaster on inside walls or ceilings.

215 or 59.1 per cent of the structures in the Project Area are reported as being vermin infested, resulting in a health hazard. 147 or 40.4 per cent of the structures in the Project Area lack hot-running water. 233 or 64.0 per cent of the structures in the Project Area contain exposed electrical wiring, constituting a hazard. 280 or 76.9 per cent of the structures have floors that sag. 103 or 28.3 per cent of the structures have faulty foundations. 104 or 28.6 per cent of the structures have split or deteriorated framing. 138 or 37.9 per cent of the structures in the Project Area possess exposed electrical panels, constituting a hazard. 250 or 68.7 per cent of the structures in the Project Area have obsolete plumbing. 172 or 47.3 per cent of the structures in the Project Area have toilets without proper ventilation. 45 or 12.4 per cent of the structures in the Project Area lack artificial lighting in public hallways, constituting a hazard. About 40 per cent of the lodging houses in the Project Area have lodging rooms which lack access to two means of egress, and about 65 per cent have less than one toilet for each eight (8) persons of licensed capacity.

6. The Project Area presents very serious traffic control problems which cannot be solved adequately, under the existing street patterns, by traffic signals and other traffic engineering means. It would be prohibitively expensive and inefficient to attempt to improve the street pattern by selective demolition of existing structures without a complete redevelopment of the entire Area. Of the total length of streets (about 4.9 miles) in the Project Area, about one-third consists of roadways less than 28 feet in width, and unable to accommodate two lanes for traffic movement with parking on one side of the street. Many of the streets are too narrow for expeditious traffic movement particularly when, due to the absence of off-street loading facilities, streets are used continuously for pickup and delivery purposes by trucks serving the commercial and business uses in the Area. 253, or 95.8% of the non-residential structures in the Project Area lack off-street loading facilities. The pattern of narrow streets is now obsolete, and this condition will be further aggravated with the completion of additional highway access to the Central Business District now under construction.

The Project Area has 78 street intersections, of which only 32 are right-angle intersections. Some of the intersections are large "squares" having as many as 9 intersecting or entering streets, creating dangerous and costly traffic control problems as well as pedestrian-crossing difficulties. The Area has a high accident experience.

7. The Project Area has in recent years experienced substantial adverse changes in economic and business conditions. The total of real estate assessments in the Project Area decreased from over \$27,000,000 in 1946 to less than \$17,000,000 in 1960. The number of private businesses and the number of persons employed in private enterprise in the Area have also decreased. The decreases in the Project Area have been substantially greater than those experienced in the City as a whole.

Beginning at the intersection of the extended center line of Staniford Street with the extended northerly sideline of Merrimac Street;

Thence running in a southerly direction along the center line of Staniford Street to the intersection of the center line of Staniford Street extended to intersect with the southerly sideline of Cambridge Street;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction along the southerly sideline of Cambridge Street to a point which is the intersection of the south-easterly sideline of Chardon Street extended to intersect with the southerly sideline of Cambridge Street;

Thence turning and running in a northeasterly direction by the extended southeasterly sideline of Chardon Street and by the southeasterly sideline of Chardon Street to a point which is the intersection of the southwesterly sideline of Chardon Court with the southeasterly sideline of Chardon Street;

Thence turning and running by said southwesterly sideline of Chardon Court to a point at the end of Chardon Court;

Thence turning and running northeasterly by vacant land of the New England Tel. & Tel. Co. to a point which is the northerly corner of said land;

Thence turning and running southeasterly by said land of New England Tel. & Tel. Co. to a point which is the easterly corner of said land;

Thence turning and running southwesterly by said land and by other property of the New England Tel. & Tel. Co. to a point at the northeasterly sideline of Bowdoin Square;

Thence turning and running across Bowdoin Square and Cambridge Street in a southerly direction to a point at the southerly sideline of Cambridge Street;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction by the southerly sideline of Cambridge Street to a point which is the intersection of the southerly sideline of Bowdoin Square with the northerly sideline of Somerset Street;

Thence turning and running in a southerly direction along the westerly sideline of Somerset Street to a point which is the intersection of the northerly building line of the so-called New Court House extended to intersect with the westerly sideline of Somerset Street;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction by said extended building line and by said building line to a point which is the northeast corner of said New Court House;

Thence turning and running in a southerly direction by the easterly building line of the New Court House and the so-called Old Court House to a point which is the intersection of the easterly building line of the Old Court House extended to meet with the extended northerly property line of number 34 Pemberton Square;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction by said extended property line of 34 Pemberton Square and by the northerly property line of 34 Pemberton Square to a point which is a northerly corner of said property;

Thence turning and running in a southerly direction to another corner of said property;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction along another northerly sideline of same said property which is numbered 39 Tremont Street;

Thence across Tremont Street by last said northerly property line extended to a point at the easterly sideline of Tremont Street;

Thence turning and running in a northerly direction along said easterly sideline of Tremont Street to a point which is the southerly sideline of 16 Tremont Street;

Thence turning and running in a northerly direction along the easterly sideline of the same said numbered 16 Tremont Street which is also numbered 42 Court Street to a point in the southerly sideline of Court Street;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction along the southerly sideline of Court Street to a point which is the intersection of the easterly sideline of Franklin Avenue extended to intersect with the southerly sideline of Court Street;

Thence turning and running in a northerly direction along said easterly sideline extended and the easterly sideline of Franklin Avenue to a point which is in the southerly sideline of Cornhill;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction along the southerly sideline of Cornhill to a point in said southerly sideline which is the easterly property line of 30 Cornhill;

Thence turning and running in a southerly direction by various courses and distances along the easterly property lines of number 30 Cornhill to a point which is the intersection of the northerly property line of number 1 Court Street with the easterly sideline of the aforesaid number 30 Cornhill, also numbered 17 Court Street;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction along the northerly property line of said number 1 Court Street to a point in the westerly sideline of Washington Street;

Thence crossing Washington Street to a point in the easterly sideline of Washington Street which is the intersection point of the northerly property line of number 192 Washington Street, with the easterly sideline of Washington Street;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction by the northerly property line of the aforesaid 192 Washington Street and by said property line extended to a point in the easterly sideline of Devonshire Street;

Thence turning and running in a northerly direction along the easterly sideline of Devonshire Street to Dock Square;

Thence turning and running by the southerly sideline of Dock Square to the easterly sideline of Congress Street;

Thence turning and running in a southerly direction by the easterly sideline of Congress Street to the northerly sideline of State Street;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction by the northerly sideline of State Street to the westerly sideline of 50 State Street;

Thence turning and running in a general northerly direction by various courses and distances along the westerly property line of 50 State Street also numbered 25 Faneuil Hall Square to a point in the southerly sideline of Faneuil Hall Square;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction by the southerly sideline of Faneuil Hall Square to a point opposite the westerly building line of Faneuil Hall;

Thence turning and running in a northerly direction across Faneuil Hall Square along the westerly face of Faneuil Hall to the northwesterly corner of Faneuil Hall;

Thence turning and running in an easterly direction along the northerly face of Faneuil Hall to the northeasterly corner of Faneuil Hall;

Thence turning and running in a northerly direction to a point in the northwesterly sideline of North Street between number 24 and 26 North Street;

Thence turning and running in a southwesterly direction along said northwesterly sideline of North Street to the corner of Union Street;

Thence turning and running in a northwesterly direction by the easterly sideline of Union Street to the corner of Hanover Street;

Thence turning and running by the southeasterly sideline of Hanover Street to the corner of Blackstone Street;

Thence turning and running across Hanover Street in a northwesterly direction by the southwesterly sideline of Blackstone Street which is also a State highway location layout line to the end of Blackstone Street at Haymarket Square;



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